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KINGS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.  
Contributions to American History, Number One

The Life and Service  
OF  
Major-General  
**WILLIAM ALEXANDER**

Also Called  
The Earl of Stirling



By CHARLES A. DITMAS







GENERAL LORD STIRLING

Born at New York, 1726. Died at Albany, 1783.  
HERO OF BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND, AUGUST 27TH, 1776  
OUR FIRST NATIONAL BATTLE

Painted for Chas. M. Higgins by Eleanor C. Bannister, Brooklyn, 1919, from  
Portrait from life by Bass Otis in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, and from  
Miniature in the Life of Lord Stirling written by his Grandson, William  
Alexander Duer, published by New Jersey Historical Society, 1847.

*Kings County Historical Society*

INCORPORATED

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*The LIFE and SERVICE*

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*Major-General*

*William Alexander*

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BY

*CHARLES ANDREW DITMAS*

*President of the Kings County Historical Society*

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CHARLES A. DITMAS  
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OCT 21 1920

MAJOR-GENERAL WILLIAM ALEXANDER  
CALLED  
LORD STIRLING

American History presents no more interesting character than William Alexander, the patriot. The son of a great patriot and a charming, capable woman who played no small part in both the business and the social life of her age. That he was one of Washington's favorite Generals can be construed only as recognizing his ability and loyalty to the great cause.

James Alexander, his father, was born in Scotland in 1691, and came to New York in 1715, having been compelled to leave his native land because he had served as an officer of engineers in the army of The Pretender. In 1716, because of his ability as an engineer, he was appointed Surveyor-General of the Colony of New York and of the Colony of New Jersey. He possessed much scientific knowledge, particularly in mathematics. Taking up the study of law, he was admitted to practice and attained a high place at the bar. In 1721 he was appointed Attorney-General, and from 1721 to 1737 and again from 1750 to 1756 he was a member of the Governor's Council. In 1737 he was elected to the Colonial Assembly, and from 1722 until his death he was a member of the Governor's Council of the Colony of New Jersey. A most remarkable instance of a man serving in the highest governing body of two Colonies at the same time. In 1721 he married the rich widow of Samuel Provoost, whose maiden name was Mary Sprott; her father was John Sprott, of Wigtown, Scotland. By Samuel Provoost she had two sons, John and David. Her husband, Samuel Provoost, had acquired a large estate in mercantile business, the profits of which in those days were enormous. His estate was divided between his widow and two sons. The widow continued the business with considerable success. Her son David grew up to be a sea captain, but died while still a young man, before marriage. The other son, John Provoost, survived his mother, who upon her death in 1761 left him five thousand pounds and his brother David's portrait. He already had one-third of his father's estate and possibly his brother's share.

It was quite natural that when the young widow found herself left in the world with her two boys, and not only a large estate to care for but also a flourishing business to manage, she frequently turned to the young and rising lawyer for advice, and that business turned into friendship, and friendship into love, and the minister did the rest.

James Alexander was in partnership with a young Englishman by the name of William Smith, later Justice of the Supreme Court, Attorney-General, Councilor, Recorder, and one of the founders of Princeton College, and father of the celebrated Chief Justice and historian of New York.

Alexander & Smith were the Counsellors for Acting Governor Rip Van Dam in the difficulties which he had with the arrant, unpopular Governor Crosby, and when Crosby caused the arrest of John Peter Zenger, and the suppression of his press, Alexander & Smith appeared for Zenger. So wrought up was the Governor that he had the firm suspended from practice before the Courts. And it was only by securing James Hamilton, of Philadelphia, a venerable and learned member of the bar, in fact, the leading member, to come on to New York and represent their client, that they compelled a hearing in Court, a trial by jury, and, although the Court was biased, the jury acquitted Zenger. This was the first great fight for liberty. James Alexander played a leading part. It has been said that it was his wife Mary who went to Philadelphia and induced Hamilton to come to New York, to defend the people represented by her husband's client against an oppressive Governor.

Meanwhile his wife continued the business of her first husband, and with considerable success. Associated with her were her sons, and when William Alexander grew up he, too, entered the business as a clerk and later as a partner. During the French and Indian War Mrs. Alexander secured the contract to supply the Royal Troops with clothes and provisions. While thus engaged young Alexander attracted the attention of the Military authorities, and he secured a commission in the Commissariat Department of the Provincial Army. This brought him to the attention of General Shirley, who appointed him his Aide-de-Camp and Private Secretary. Here Alexander gained considerable military experience, which fitted him for his high command during the Revolutionary War. In 1756 his father died, leaving a large but not very productive estate to his widow, son and several daughters.

In 1754 William Alexander was associated with several other prominent young men in the establishment of the New York Society Library, in which public enterprise it is said he was encouraged by his mother. He was elected in 1761 a member of the St. Andrews Society of New York, of which he became the fifth President, serving from 1761 to 1764. Both of these Societies are still active institutions in New York, both have acquired wealth, social status and have records of great usefulness. He was one of the first Governors of Kings, now Columbia College; he succeeded his father as Surveyor-General, and later served on the Governor's Council.



In 1756 General Shirley was recalled to England to answer charges of failure to successfully carry on the war. Major Alexander accompanied him and appeared in his behalf before the House of Commons in April, 1757. General Shirley was acquitted of blame. During his stay in England Major Alexander met the leading men of England and for many years afterwards kept up a correspondence with some of them. Having completed the public business which had brought him to England, Major Alexander turned his attention to some private affairs.

It had been family tradition that his father was next of kin to the Earl of Stirling, who had died without issue in 1739. This Earldom included grants to vast tracts of land in America, as well as in Scotland. A jury of Service of the leading men of Edinburgh declared upon the evidence presented to them that he was Earl of Stirling. Under Scottish law this was considered sufficient warrant to assume the title. Some of his friends now advised him to petition the King for recognition and confirmation in and to the title, which he did. The King referred the petition to the House of Lords, which was exceedingly slow to act. Two years passed. In the meantime the distressing news of the death of his mother reached him. People generally were accepting the action of the Jury of Service and calling him "Lord Stirling." He likewise was facing the necessity of living up to his claims, and was signing himself "Stirling." At the death of his mother he was thrown back to some extent upon his own resources. It is true he now came into the bulk of his father's estate. This estate consisted largely of mineral and farming lands in New Jersey. In addition, he received the city mansion in New York from his mother. This was a large mansion and had been noted as a center of social life. It was on what was known as Broad Street, between Stone and Mill Street. Returning to America, he soon disposed of such business enterprises as he was engaged in, sold the New York mansion and erected a manor house at Basking Ridge, New Jersey. Here he was elected and appointed to the various offices his father had held, and here he began a career of developing the industries of New Jersey, which if he had possessed larger capital would no doubt have proved very prosperous.

Without question it could be said of him that he gained the respect and confidence of his neighbors throughout that section of New Jersey and that he continued to hold this confidence to the end of his days.

The establishment of iron foundries and other enterprises in which he entered seemed to be doomed to failure. The Revolutionary War was but the climax to these business ventures. He resided in the Basking Ridge home (burned in February, 1920) until the Revolution called him to the colors; living in a style befitting not only his American station in society but also that of the title which by common consent he bore.

Shortly after leaving England the House of Lords denied his petition to the Crown on the ground of lack of sufficient evidence, with an admonition not to assume or use the title. This Major Alexander continued to do, claiming that by right of the Jury of Service's verdict he was entitled to the name and title of Stirling. A proceeding usually followed by claimants to a title, for any other action would be an acknowledgment of error. Lord Stirling was addressed in that title, not only by his neighbors and social and business associates, but also by His Majesty's Governor of the Colony of New Jersey, and was so appointed to the Governor's Council. It would seem that the use of an obsolete title by one who not only claimed it as a right, but whose right to use it had been approved by a Jury of Service, as required under Scottish laws, particularly when His Majesty's Governor recognized this right and that the only estoppel named by the House of Lords was that which affected his seat in that body and his ownership of the lands, was permissible.

Lord Stirling was connected with some of the leading families of America. He married Sarah Livingston, daughter of Philip and Catherine Van Brugh Livingston. This Philip Livingston was the first President of the St. Andrews Society. Lord Stirling and Lady Sarah, as she was called, had two children; first Mary, born 1749. She married Robert Watts, a Loyalist; second Catherine, born March 8, 1755. She married first Colonel William Duer, a celebrated patriot, by whom she had eight children. After his death she married William Neilson, a prominent business man.

Lord Stirling's brother-in-law, Philip Livingston, was a member of the Continental Congress, 1774 to 1778, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Another brother-in-law was Peter Van Brugh Livingston, President of the Provincial Congress of New York. Still another William Livingston was the rebel Governor of New Jersey from 1776 to 1790 and a signer of the Federal Constitution in 1787; while a niece was the wife of the illustrious statesman, Governor and Chief Justice John Jay. His half brother, John Provoost, married a daughter of Colonel Rutgers; one of her nephews was killed in the battle of Long Island. They had a son, Samuel Provoost, who was a clergyman of the Episcopal Church and an Assistant Rector of Trinity Church. Because of his Pro-Whig views he found it necessary to resign his church. He served with the Continental Army as a chaplain, and on at least one occasion took active part in an engagement. At the close of the War he was made Rector of Trinity Church and Bishop of New York. He was known as the rebel Bishop, and was Washington's Rector while President in New York.

His son-in-law, Robert Watts, found himself in a rather unhappy state, occupying a conspicuous place in the business life of New York; while his father and his uncle, James Delancey, were stiff-necked Loyalists, he faced the fact of his wife's family being strong patriots. During the War he remained loyal to the Crown and attended quietly to his own business. He and his wife had three daughters and two sons. These children left many descendants who have occupied prominent places in our city's history, a grandson being the well-known professor of anatomy, Robert Watts, M.D. Lady Mary Watts' sisters-in-law were Anna Watts, who married Captain Archibald Kennedy, whose mansion stood at No. 3 Broadway; Susanna, who married Phillip Kearney, her son, Stephen Watts Kearney, being a Major-General in the Mexican War; Mary Watts, who married the celebrated Sir John Johnson, of the Mohawk Valley; and Margaret, who married Major Robert W. Leake.

Colonel William Duer, who married Lord Stirling's second daughter, emigrated to America in 1768, after serving with Lord Clive in India. He acquired property on the Hudson River and served as a commissary for New York. He was also a member of the New York Committee of Safety and at one time represented New York in the Continental Congress. The wedding of Colonel Duer and Lady Kitty was a notable occasion; it took place during the absence of her father with his command, and General Washington, acting in his place, gave the bride away. And his own Chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Armstrong, performed the ceremony. Their eldest son, William Alexander Duer, LL.D., was, we are informed, at one time a student at Erasmus Hall Academy. He was one of the first midshipmen of the U. S. Navy, gave up the Navy to study law; he became noted as a lawyer, was appointed Judge of the Third Circuit Court of New York; in 1834 he was elected President of Columbia College, in which office he added to his well-earned reputation. Another son, John Duer, was an eminent Jurist. Among the descendants of Colonel William Duer and his wife, Lady Kitty, is Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer, of New York, an authority on Colonial History. Governor Burnett of New York was godfather of Mary Alexander at her baptism.

I have thus sketched some of the family relationships of Lord Stirling to show not only the social position which he held, but also the character which was bred in him and which by associations must have been reinforced. No son of James Alexander and Mary Sprott Provoost but would be found defending the rights of mankind. This heritage, reinforced by association with the patriotic Livingston family, left no other course open to a man with the character of William Alexander, Earl of Stirling.

## REVOLUTIONARY CAREER

Lord Stirling was, from education, early association and mature judgment a Whig in politics. He used his influence in England to secure the repeal of the Stamp Act and was among the first to take up arms in the defense, as he put it, of our liberties. While yet a member of the Council of Governor Franklin of New Jersey, he accepted the nomination of his neighbors for Colonel of the Regiment of Militia to be raised in Somerset County, which nomination was duly confirmed by the New Jersey Provincial Congress, and his commission issued accordingly.

This was the cause of considerable correspondence between his lordship and Governor Franklin, through which runs the strongest patriotic fervor on the part of Lord Stirling. In his letter to Governor Franklin under date of Sept. 14, 1775, he says: "I have lately been informed that the good people of this county have unanimously chosen me Colonel of a Regiment of Militia, that the Congress of this Province have approved of the choice, and have issued a commission accordingly, which I have received. This mark of the confidence of the people among whom I reside is most satisfactory and I think honorable to me. To be thus called forth at a time when their dearest rights are invaded, to take so prominent a part in their defense, cannot but excite the most grateful feelings of one who has ever been a friend of the liberties of mankind," etc.

No faltering here in the path of duty. Quickly he organized his regiment, equipped and put them in training, and on October 18th he ordered a general muster to be held November 6th. Before the day for muster arrived Lord Stirling was commissioned by the Continental Congress to command the first of two regiments of New Jersey troops for the Continental line. On hearing of this appointment he went to Philadelphia, received his commission and conferred with Congress, and returned to New Jersey to recruit men for his regiment. He had no trouble in securing many men from his old regiment of militia, and within a short time he had established headquarters at Elizabethtown. It was while his headquarters were at Elizabethtown that Lord Stirling made a daring exploit in capturing the British armed transport, *Blue Mountain Valley*, of 300 tons burden, mounting six guns and loaded with stores for the British army at Boston. Congress commended him by resolution for this exploit. His letter reporting the affair to the President of Congress is a clear account of the adventure. It is as follows:

Colonel the Earl of Stirling to the President of Congress.

"January 24th, 1776.

"Sir—On Monday last I received intelligence that a transport laden with stores for the Ministerial army at Boston was hovering off Sandy Hook, in distress, and waiting for assistance from the men-of-war at New York. I thought it a matter of so much importance that I immediately set out for Amboy, and there seized a

pilot-boat, with forty men, that was just putting out, and about two, yesterday morning, I was joined by three other boats from Elizabethtown, who voluntarily came on this service under Colonel Dayton and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas. We found her about six leagues South-East of Sandy Hook. We boarded and took her without opposition. She proves to be the *Blue Mountain Valley*, commanded by Captain James Hamilton Dempster, laden with coal, provisions, &c. (I wish it had been arms and ammunition, as I expected.) We are now off Amboy, and intend to push this evening into the Sound, between Staten Island and the Main. I write now in the hurry and noise incident to such occasions; I will write the particulars as soon as possible. I am, &c."

"The following are the names of the officers and men belonging to the militia of Elizabethtown, who volunteered on the occasion: Colonel, Elias Dayton, Lieut. Colonel, Edward Thomas, Captains, Oliver Spencer and William Button, 1st Lieutenants, Francis Barber\* and Aaron Hatfield, 2nd Lieutenants, Thomas Morrell, Quarter-Master, George Evertson, Surgeon, William Barnet, Commanders of Boats, Smith Hatfield and John Thomas, Serjeants, William Stegins, David Ross, and Henry Baker, Privates and citizens, Samuel Smith, Lewis Blanchard, Edmund Thomas, Thomas Elstone, Ephraim Marsh, Adam Lee, Thomas Quigley, Henry M. Monagal, Price Parcel, Barney Ogden, Timothy B. Stout, Joseph Meeker, Junr., George Weeks, Edward Beaty, David Steward, Daniel Craig, Thomas Lee, Stephen Wheeler, Farrington Price, Elijah Woodruff, Jonathan Woodruff, Aaron Ogden,\* Edward Jones, William Clark, Jonathan Clark, Jonathan Nichols, Samuel Mann, Silas Freeman, William Meeker, Samuel Ogden, Gabriel Meeker, Jonathan Pierson, Elihu Parsons, Robert Spencer, Daniel Macarty, William Ramsden, Samuel Sealey, Samuel Lee, Thomas Hoyt, Lewis Woodruff, Isaiah Gray, William Livingston, Jr., Brockholst Livingston,\* John Hendrix, Samuel Morehouse, Jacob Carle, Benjamin Woodruff, Daniel Woodruff, Benjamin Hinds, John Gray, James Clenchy, John Miller, John Runyon, Nicholas Deane, Moses Connel, Godfrey Blackney, Timothy Burns, Simon Simonson, Richard Miller, and John Miller, 2nd. Those marked with an asterisk were afterwards aids of Lord Stirling, and subsequently rose to greater eminence. Francis Barber in a few years attained the command of a regiment, and distinguished himself on several occasions during the war. Aaron Ogden became Governor of the State; Brockholst Livingston, a Judge successively of the Supreme Court of New York and of the United States."

The above letter and note are copied from the Collection of the New Jersey Historical Society, Vol. 2, 1847.

On January 10th, 1776, Washington wrote him that he was sending Major-General Charles Lee to put New York in a state of defense, and asking his assistance. On February 5th he marched to New York under orders from Major-General Charles Lee. On March 1st, 1776, Congress promoted him to Brigadier-General. His reply to the President of Congress upon being notified of his promotion is characteristic of the man. It is as follows:

"This instance of the good opinion which the Congress entertain of my zeal and attachment to the American cause does me high honour, and I receive it from my country with that gratitude and satisfaction which will excite me to do everything in my power to deserve it. I wish I had more knowledge and experience, and was better qualified to execute the

arduous task I am now appointed to; but the Congress may rest assured that in every situation I will endeavour to do the best I can and execute their commands so far as it is possible."

At this time Major-General Charles Lee was transferred to the Southern Department, and the command at New York devolved upon Lord Stirling. Lee reported to the President of Congress: "In very little pain about the execution of what they have concerted, as it was committed to the hands of Lord Stirling, who showed much intelligence and activity." To Washington, Lee wrote: "His lordship is active and discreet and will acquit himself well." Lord Stirling proceeded to put New York in a state of defense. As an engineer he was competent for this task; he planned most of the defenses around New York, which military experts still consider excellent. In the erection of these forts he was handicapped by insufficient men; he needed 8,000 when he had only 1,800, of whom the time of 1,300 men was about up and they were going back home. He cut off in a large measure the communications carried on between the Tories in the city and the British warships in the Bay. He recruited and trained men for Canada and otherwise carried on with vigor and ability the duties of the Commander General of the Middle Department, which because of the illness of Major-General Schuyler had devolved upon him. A careful study of the details of the period, the correspondence, the plans, the muster rolls, the orderly books, the proceedings of the Continental and Provincial Congresses, of the Committee of Safety, and the maps and plans of the fortifications, leads one to believe that here was a genius. A military engineer equal to any, an organizer of great ability, a strategist by natural instinct, a brave soldier, and a man of deep feeling, who could always get the best out of his men. In some ways his record is superior to that of any other General of the Revolution.

The part he played in the Battle of Long Island was the outstanding feature of that event, which was our first great battle as a free nation. The British landed on Long Island August 22d, 1776, and advanced in three columns to invest the American works on Brooklyn Heights. These works consisted of a chain of strong forts and earthworks from the Wallabout to Gowanus Creek. The outer line of defenses was established along the ridge of hills which form the backbone of Long Island, extending from Cypress Hills to Greenwood Cemetery. The passes through these hills were strongly guarded. The outer line of defenses was under command of Major-General John Sullivan; the entire force was commanded by Major-General Israel Putnam; an outpost was established at the Red Lion Tavern, which was situated at the junction of Gowanus Road, Martense Lane and the Road to the Narrows. Brigadier-General Parsons was the Brigadier on duty on August 27th, 1776, an

office corresponding to the modern Officer of the Day. At 2 o'clock on the morning of August 27th General Grant's troops advanced upon the American guard at the Red Lion Tavern and fired upon them. They retired, sending word to General Putnam that the British were advancing up the Narrows Road. Putnam went in person to the tent of Lord Stirling and ordered him to go at once, taking two regiments with him to hold in check the advance of the enemy. Stirling promptly called out Haslet's and Smallwood's battalions and marched down the Gowanus Road to meet the British. Colonel Atlee was in the road ahead of him with about 120 of his men, and Lieut.-Col. Clark, with Huntington's Connecticut Continentals and Kachlein's Pennsylvania Riflemen soon joined him.

Taking advantage of the natural lay of the land, Lord Stirling extended his command, consisting of his own and Brigadier-General Parson's Brigade, from Bluckie's Barracks (a knoll at the present foot of Twenty-fourth Street and extending up to and encircling the hills now known as Battle Hill in Greenwood Cemetery). Here he rallied his men which consisted of Smallwood's, Haslet's, Kachlein's, Atlee's and Huntington's regiments. In addition he was reinforced by a two-gun battery from Knox's artillery under Capt. Lieut. Benejah Carpenter. Here he rallied his 1,600 men to face with firm determination the 7,000 British troops advancing against them under General Grant. He told his men how, while on a visit to London, many years before, he was in the gallery of the House of Commons and had heard this same Grant declare "that with 5,000 British soldiers he would march from one end of the American continent to the other." "He may have," added Stirling, "his 5,000 men with him now; we are not so many, but I think we are enough to prevent his advancing further on his march over the continent than that mill pond."

Stirling and his men held well the ground they occupied. In some places they were driven back a few feet by the British troops. When you consider that with from 1,600 to 2,000 men he held 7,000 of the picked troops from England at bay from 4 A.M. to 11 A.M. in the open fields and woods without fortifications of any kind except what nature had provided, it speaks of wonderful courage, discipline and skill. He led these men in person, not from a distance, but wherever the British shock troops advanced. At 11 o'clock in the morning, firing from the rear told him that the American outer works had been outflanked, and that a rapid retreat to the main works was necessary, but already the Gowanus road was occupied by Cornwallis and his British troops, and a battery was planted at the old Stone House of Nicholas Vechte. Realizing the situation at a glance, Lord Stirling ordered his main force to retreat

by fording Gowanus Creek and passing over the causeway to Red Hook while with about 256 men of Smallwood's Maryland Battalion he held Lord Cornwallis in check at the old Stone House.

Closing up his ranks, Stirling attacked this column of Cornwallis again and again. Fast dwindled the 256. But they had a task to perform, which was to hold in check the whole British column until their comrades could get across Freeck's Causeway. Fighting like demons, these young men, from the first families of Maryland, under the inspiring leadership of Lord Stirling fought until only a few were left standing, and these, including his lordship, were wounded. Finding it impossible to cut his way through the British army, Lord Stirling surrendered his sword to the Hessian General, De Heister, rather than hand it to Lord Cornwallis. At the time he surrendered he was surrounded by the entire British army of upwards of 20,000 men, while he had only the remnant of 256 left.

The only criticism leveled against his action in the battle was that he had faced the British General Grant, in line of battle formation in the open field. The first time in the Revolution our men had so gone into an engagement. That it was a test of courage which he and his men nobly stood, is one of the glories that they earned. The British called him "as brave an officer as ever fought a battle." That he saved by his bravery the bulk of his command, some 1,200 to 1,400 men, who succeeded in fording the Gowanus, is a credit which cannot be taken from him.

Hearing of the battle, General Washington hurried over from his headquarters at New York and took up a position upon the ramparts of Cobble Hill fort, at what is now Atlantic Avenue between Clinton and Court Streets; this was high ground and he could watch the entire battle through his field glass. He noticed how Stirling met the unexpected conditions; he could see the charge of the Maryland Battalion under Stirling's personal leadership; he could see them hold the British and Hessians in check; he knew that a slaughter was their lot; he realized that these men knew and were willing to meet this sure death, that their comrades, the rest of their division, could get back to the American works with safety and thus save them for future usefulness to the great cause for which they fought. Those standing near General Washington heard him mutter: "Great God, what brave fellows I must this day lose."

General Washington, having witnessed the remarkable bravery and ability of Lord Stirling, immediately endeavored to make an exchange of prisoners so as to regain his services. He succeeded in exchanging Governor Mortfort Brown, of Florida, for him, and shortly after the evacuation of New York Lord Stirling was enabled to rejoin the army. During the memorable retreat through the Jerseys, he held important



commands, and at one time with a few Continentals arrested the progress of a vastly superior column under Lord Cornwallis near Springfield. On February 19th, 1777, Congress promoted Lord Stirling to Major-General. Early in the spring a column under his command again frustrated a column under Cornwallis by seizing the passes near Westfield. When a formidable army from Canada under General Burgoyne was expected to descend through New York in 1777, Lord Stirling's division was ordered to the highlands of the Hudson. Finding that the British intended to strike at Philadelphia, Washington recalled all his men and marched to the defense of that city. In the Battle of Brandywine Lord Stirling commanded a division under his old commander, Major-General Sullivan. Here he again fought bravely and assisted in saving a defeated army. In the Battle of Germantown he commanded the reserves and posted his men with critical judgment.

In 1778 Colonel James Wilkinson, an Aide-de-Camp of Major-General Gates, confided to Lord Stirling's Aide, Major McWilliams, certain statements made by General Conway to General Gates regarding General Washington. Lord Stirling, a loyal friend of General Washington, conveyed a memorandum of these statements to his beloved General with this remark: "The enclosed was communicated by Colonel Wilkinson to Major McWilliams. Such wicked duplicity I shall always consider it my duty to detect." A correspondence between Washington, Gates and Conway now opened which led to the discovery of the Conway cabal, so called.

In the Battle of Monmouth, June 28th, 1778, Lord Stirling commanded the left wing; here occurred the misconduct of Major-General Charles Lee, which might have proved fatal if Major-General Greene, who commanded the right wing, had not taken up an advantageous position on the right, while Lord Stirling with the left wing successfully parried every attempt made by the enemy to turn his flank, and placed his artillery in such well-chosen positions that they were able to save the day and help Washington turn defeat into victory.

Major-General Charles Lee, stung by the language Washington had used to him, when he found him retreating without cause, demanded a court-martial. Accordingly, he was arrested and a court-martial convened to try him on three charges. Lord Stirling was President of this Court which found Major-General Lee guilty on all charges and sentenced him to be suspended from his command for twelve months. Congress approved their sentence. On October 15th, 1778, Lord Stirling proceeded to Elizabethtown, N. J., to watch the action of the British Army and Navy at New York. In 1779 he conducted the attack on Powles Hook, where Major Light Horse Harry Lee succeeded in capturing 150 of the garrison, for which he and his men received the thanks

of the Commander-in-Chief and also of Congress. He led on January 15th, 1780, an attack upon Staten Island.

In 1781 he was ordered to Albany, where he was engaged in preparing the northern country for defense against a new attack from Canada. There were active campaigns going on in several parts of the northern department, and the duty of keeping in constant touch with several important commands under him, in keeping them recruited up, fed, clothed and properly equipped, was no easy task. On November 1st, 1781, he had his army concentrated along the Hudson at Saratoga in anticipation of an attack by General St. Leger. On the next day he had the pleasure of announcing to his army the surrender of his old antagonist, Lord Cornwallis, and shortly later, being convinced that St. Leger did not intend to attack him, he dismissed his militia and returned to his headquarters at Albany. He carried on the war in his department with vigor, tracing down the small detachments of Tories, Indians and British soldiers which infested that region. He removed his headquarters for the winter to Philadelphia, in January, 1782; this city was included in his military department. Early in the summer of 1782 he served as President of the Board of Officers. As soon as this duty was completed he returned to his command at Albany. Here the fatigue due to the command on an exposed frontier, added to the hard service in the field which he had undergone since the beginning of the war, brought on what was diagnosed as a violent attack of gout. Probably today it would have some other name. This disease proved fatal and the great General passed to his eternal reward January 15th, 1783, aged 57 years. He was buried in the Livingston family vault in the Dutch Reformed Church in Albany. When this church was demolished his remains were reinterred in the cemetery of the Protestant Episcopal Church, of which denomination he was a member.

Lord Stirling's large fortune crumbled during the Revolution from an estimated estate of £100,000, over and above indebtedness, to only a claim for pay, due from the Colony of New Jersey. His two daughters were both ardent in their love for the cause. The oldest had married a Tory who before the war was over came to believe in the Continental cause; the youngest married the illustrious soldier, statesman and patriot, Colonel William Duer. Both daughters were the ancestors of a host of splendid men and women, who have been ornaments to American society.

In wealth, in disposition, in ability, in character and in personal appearance there was a strong resemblance between Lord Stirling and the immortal Washington. Had he lived the country would have found him one of her ablest statesmen. The cause of rights of the governed, espoused by his father forty years before the Revolution, found its fruition in the cause he espoused in 1776.

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Addresses and articles by Mr. Charles M. Higgins upon the Battle of Long Island and kindred subjects. Published in newspapers and pamphlets at various times from 1909-1916.

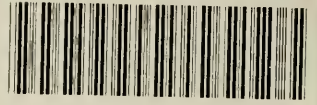
New York Historical Society Collection. 1896.

The Record published by the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society contains many articles which refer to the life and family of General Alexander.

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